The specification was objected to on two grounds. First, the abstract contained objectionable language, which has been removed. In addition, the abstract has been amended to conform to the independent claims, as amended herein. No new matter has been added, and the abstract is believed to be free of defects.

Second, the specification also contained no description of the drawings and included foreign language text. As amended herein, the specification now contains a brief description of the drawings on page 2, and the objectionable foreign text on page 6 has been removed. It is believed no further objection to the specification is warranted.

Claim 16 was objected to for misspelling aluminosilicate. As this claim is now canceled, the objection is moot, but applicants have corrected the misspelling in the specification and claims amended as well.

Claim 12 was rejected as indefinite in the range for c. Both independent claims 10 and 18 now recite a range for c of 5 to 10, as disclosed on page 2, line 25. This rejection of claim 12 should be withdrawn.

Claims 10, 11, 14, and 15 remain rejected as anticipated or obvious over the abstract of DD 140,987. As amended, claim 10 clearly avoids this reference, which, as pointed out in applicants' previous paper, discloses a

value of 15 for c. The Examiner finds that the claimed range of c would have resulted from routine optimization of the data given in the abstract. But this is not a case of routine optimization, as these parameters are not identified by the reference as in any way critical or result-effective. Proof of such recognition in the art is mandatory if the Examiner wishes to rely on the doctrine of routine optimization. M.P.E.P. § 2144.05.II.B. It is not seen how the disclosure of a set of data that results in a value *that falls outside of the claims* provides any guidance to one of skill as to how to reach the claimed range, without anything more. The DD 140 987 abstract provides no guidance to control the acid content and dimensions to arrive at the claimed particles. There can be no obviousness over DD 140,987.

Claims 10, 14, 18, and 19 are rejected as anticipated or obvious over U.S. 5,486,317 (Dorset). Using the data for the example cited by the Examiner, one solves for c and gets 0.525, which falls outside applicants' range. Like DD 140,987, Dorset provides no motivation of guidance and shows no recognition of critical in particle size or weight that would lead one of skill to the claimed process limits. Thus these claims are patentable over Dorset.

Claims 10, 12, 14, 15, 18, and 19 are rejected as anticipated by or obvious over U.S. 5,573,697 (Riddick). Riddick does not disclose or suggest the claimed alkaline detergent components of the claims as amended. Thus the claims are now allowable over Riddick.

Claims 10-12, 14, 15, 18, and 19 are rejected as obvious over WO 92/17404 (Block). Applicants' previous calculations of a range for c of 7.5 to 30 were in error by an order of magnitude. Solving for c in applicants manner using the disclosure of Block yields a correct range for c of 0.75 to 3, outside applicants' claims. Thus there is no issue of inherency. There is also no recognition of criticality in the particle mass or size, or in the amount of acid applied, on which to base routine optimization. There is no other suggestion that would lead to the claimed range for c from Block's disclosure. Thus the claims as amended are patentable over Block.

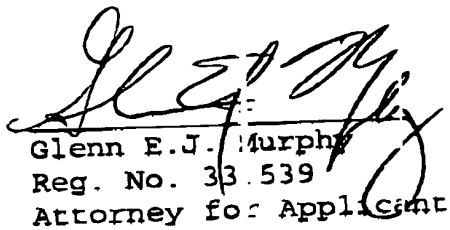
Lastly, claims 10-12, 14, 15, 18, and 19 remain rejected as obvious over GB 2,337,054 (Baillely). It is undisputed that this disclosure lies substantially outside of applicants' claims. It does not, as stated by the Examiner, overlap applicants' claims; rather, it is broadly generic to applicants' claims. Using the very disclosure cited by the Examiner, Baillely yields a range of 0.015 to 200, and more narrowly 0.11 to 50, for c. Neither endpoint comes even close to applicants' range. It is not seen how this disclosure somehow evinces an understanding that size and weight variables of applicants' process are critical. Again, it is the Examiner's burden first to show that such criticality was recognized in the art before the doctrine of routine optimization can validly be applied. Neither GB 2,337,054 nor any other reference cited thus far shows any recognition of the significance of the relationship between the amount of acid coating and particle size, let alone its quantification as claimed. Application of routine

optimization to GB 2,337,054 is improper, and the claims are allowable over this reference.

CONCLUSION

Applicants ask that the period to respond to the Office Action mailed August 1, 2002, be extended three months from November 1, 2002 to February 1, 2003. Please charge Deposit Account No. 01-1250 in the amount of $930.00 for the extension fee. Order No. 03-0062. If any fees are due for entry and consideration of this Amendment that have not been accounted for, the Commissioner is authorized to charge them to Deposit Account No. 01-1250.

Respectfully submitted,



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Filed November 22, 2000

AMENDMENTS OF FEBURARY 3, 2003

IN THE SPECIFICATION:

On page 3, the paragraph from lines 5 to 16 should read:

--A particle to be treated in accordance with the invention may optionally contain all the ingredients of a detergent, i.e. it is possible by the process according to the invention to coat a preformed detergent. However, only at least some or all of the alkaline ingredients of such detergents are preferably treated in accordance with the invention, in which case the alkaline ingredients may be present as particulate individual substances or several of the alkaline ingredients may be present in a single particle to be treated. The alkaline ingredients in question are preferably alkali metal silicates, alkali metal aluminosilicates, alkali metal phosphates, alkali metal carbonates, alkali metal perborates and alkali metal percarbonates and mixtures thereof, sodium being the preferred alkali metal.--

IN THE CLAIMS:

10. (three times amended) A process for the production of a particulate detergent or detergent premix component comprising the steps of providing a flowable acidic component, providing a particle comprising an alkaline detergent ingredient selected from the group consisting of

alkali metal silicates, alkali metal aluminosilicates, alkali metal perborates, alkali metal percarbonates, and mixtures thereof, and applying the flowable acidic component to the particle, to form a particulate detergent or detergent premix component consisting essentially of particles wherein the amount of acidic component applied to the particle is governed by the formula $m_c/(m_c + m_p) = c \cdot 1/r$, where m_c is the weight of the acidic component applied, m_p is the weight of the particle, r is the radius of the particle in μm, and c is a factor of [0.5] 5 length units to [20] 10 length units, and wherein the acidic component comprises one or more acids selected from the group consisting of mono- or dicarboxylic acids containing 10 to 22 carbon atoms, sulfuric acid monoalk(en)yl esters containing 10 to 20 carbon atoms, alk(en)yl or alkylaryl sulfonic acids containing 10 to 20 carbon atoms, and polymeric polycarboxylic acids obtainable by polymerization of ethylenically unsaturated mono- and/or dicarboxylic acids.

18. (twice amended) A method of preparing a detergent composition comprising the steps of providing a flowable acidic component, providing a particle comprising an alkaline detergent ingredient selected from the group consisting of alkali metal silicates, alkali metal alumoinsilicates, alkali metal perborates, and mixtures thereof, applying the flowable acidic component to the particle, to form a particulate detergent or detergent premix component consisting essentially of particles wherein the amount of acidic component applied to the particle is governed by the formula $m_c/(m_c + m_p) = c \cdot 1/r$,

where m_c is the weight of the acidic component applied, m_p is the weight of the particle, r is the radius of the particle in μm, and c is a factor of [0.5] 5 length units to 10 length units, and mixing the particulate detergent or detergent premix component with at least one other particulate component to form the detergent composition.

IN THE ABSTRACT:

Abstract

[The invention relates to a] A process for the production of particulate detergents or premixes suitable for their production by application of a flowable acidic component to a particle consisting at least partly of an alkaline detergent ingredient selected from the group consisting of alkali metal silicates, alkali metal aluminosilicates, alkali metal perborates, alkali metal percarbonates, and mixtures thereof, the percentage of acidic component applied being governed by the formula $m_c/(m_c + m_p) = c \cdot 1/r$, where m_c is the weight of the acidic component, m_p is the weight of the particle, r is the radius of the particle and c is a factor of [0.5] 5 length units to [20] 10 length units.